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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*Peronism in Argentina Today*

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# PERONISM IN ARGENTINA



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After 17 years of being on the outside looking in, the followers of Juan Peron stand their best chance of obtaining at least a share of power in Argentina. From Madrid, the aging former dictator is pulling the strings and trying to maneuver his forces into the best possible position for the elections promised for March 1973. To strengthen his position, he is attempting to unify a mass movement that he has deliberately kept divided since he was forced out of office and the country in 1955. In the intervening years, he has consistently cut down promising Peronist leaders in Argentina when they seemed on the way to achieving a position from which they could challenge his authority. The labor movement, the base of Peronist strength, has developed deep divisions, as have the political, women, and youth sectors of the movement. Only the intense loyalty to Peron of the rank and file can bring about the reunification that is necessary if Peronism is to share in the important decisions that will be made in the next year regarding Argentina's future form of government.

#### An Argentine Phenomenon

In the mid-1940s, Juan Peron, with the able assistance of his wife Eva, organized the Argentine working masses into a powerful political vehicle that carried him to power and kept him there for ten years. Peron's demagoguery, Eva's glamor and political astuteness, and a broad program of social welfare measures earned Peron an intensely loyal following among the working

masses and the bitter enmity of the wealthy classes and the military. In 1955, he was forcibly removed from office by a military revolt, but all efforts by succeeding governments to tarnish his image with charges of corruption and moral degeneration have failed to sway his followers.

While in power (1946-1955), Peron put together a coalition of organized labor, some parts of the middle class, and a few intellectuals. Peronist ideology has never been precisely defined, but it is highly nationalistic and puts heavy emphasis on social justice. In economics, Peronism is basically statist and leans toward autarky. Peron's rule of Argentina coincided with the emergence of the cold war, prompting him to advocate the development of a "third position" between the two "imperialist powers." Peronists now proudly call this the precursor of the "third-world" concept being adopted by the less-developed nations. Peronism has traditionally been strongly anti-Communist; in fact, its adoption of some of the more attractive precepts of Communist ideology has been a strong impediment to the development of a viable Communist movement in Argentina. Even today, most of the revolutionaries who have sprung up in Argentina have aligned themselves with, or at least describe themselves as, Peronists.

Despite the persecution of Peronists following the ouster of the "Leader" in 1955 and their proscription from full political participation in later years, Peronism has continued to be the largest and strongest political movement in Argentina. The deep loyalty of the masses has enabled Peron to maintain his pre-eminence in the movement despite 17 years of living in exile. The exclusion of Peronists from national politics and long periods of military rule have helped prevent the rise of new national political leaders. Peron has encouraged a wide variety of political and labor activists, both to confound his political opponents in Argentina and to retain his power by keeping the Peronist movement divided. He has dismissed his political lieutenants in Argentina whenever they seemed to be developing a base of their own, and there have been allegations that he ordered the assassinations of Augusto Vandor and Jose Alonso when they attained too much power



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Juan and Eva

in the labor movement. His reorganization of the Superior Council in November 1971 and his role in preventing a national strike in March 1972 demonstrate that he still wields considerable control.

### Peronist Organization

The main Peronist governing body is the Justicialist Superior Council, which has representatives from the participating sectors of the movement—political, labor, women, and youth. Juan Peron and his third wife, Isabel Martinez de Peron, are members of the council.



Peron's ten years in power. Since Peron had many young officials in his government, a number of these politicians are now only in their early fifties. In their 17 years out of power, however, they have sought their own political fortunes and have moved in different directions. Many of the nationally known figures—Raul Matera, Eloy Camus, Roberto Ares, Antonio Cafiero—fall into what could be called a moderate group. Others, such as Hector Campora and Jorge Gianola, have no identifiable political leanings of their own and exist only to serve Peron.

Jorge Paladino, one of the most astute Peronist politicians to come along in many years, was dismissed as Peron's personal representative and secretary general of the council last November. Hector Campora, Peron's new representative, and Gianola, the new secretary general, are not strong leaders, but Peron, perhaps in an attempt to breathe some life into the council, has given new representation to the more radical and dynamic wings of the movement. Many of the more prominent moderate Peronists were forced out with Paladino.

In his attempts to prepare the movement for the national elections scheduled for March 1973, Peron appears to be putting emphasis on orthodox, completely loyal Peronists and, to a lesser extent, on younger, more leftist elements in the movement. He has had some success so far, but will probably have to make full use of the moderates if he is to achieve any significant degree of unity for the elections.

**The Political Sector**—Although the basic strength of Peronism lies in its labor underpinnings, a separate group of Peronist politicians has long vied with labor leaders for control of the movement. These politicians are primarily those who served in a political capacity—cabinet ministers, legislators, and provincial officials—during



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In addition, there are neo-Peronists who advocate the principles of Peronism but reject Peron's resumption of power, and provincial caudillos who have built local organizations of their own. The neo-Peronists are likely to be squeezed out as Peron reasserts his authority and moves to unify the movement. The others, however, must be dealt with. The provincial caudillos, especially, will pose difficult problems for Peron. With their own bases of power, these men—who range from the conservative caudillo of Salta, Ricardo Durand, to the leftist Julio Antun of Cordoba—are in a position to exact concessions. The Lanusse government's requirement that political parties hold internal elections in the process of selecting candidates may help Peron overcome some of these difficulties. Peron will, in effect, be able to go over the head of local leaders to the masses, most of whom will vote as he directs. These internal elections now are being held, and the first indications are that Peron's official lists are winning in almost every case.

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**The Labor Sector**—It was on the shoulders of the working masses—neglected by other politicians, but not by Juan and Eva—that Peron rode to power in the 1940s. In Peron's ten years in power, the working man benefited greatly from the social welfare measures spearheaded by Eva and from the new power given labor organizations by President Peron. Labor was the base of Peron's power then, and it is the backbone of the movement today. The main labor organization, the General Confederation of Labor, is second only to the military as a political force in Argentina. The confederation boasts a membership in excess of two million—at least 80 percent controlled by Peronists—and is recognized as the largest and best organized labor movement in Latin America. Even under the restrictions imposed by the military when it took power in 1966, the confeder-

ation has frequently demonstrated its ability to paralyze the nation with general strikes.

Although a strike call nearly always receives full cooperation, this should not be taken as an indication of labor unity. In fact, the divisions evident in other Peronist sectors are even more troublesome in the labor movement. In recent months, there has been a serious attempt to bring unity to the "62 Organizations," long the Tammany Hall of Peronist labor. Peron ordered the "62" to reorganize to strengthen his position in negotiations with the Lanusse government, and the labor leaders have a strong incentive of their own to reunify the movement. Union leaders have long disputed leadership of the movement with the Peronist politicians and believe that a unified



Peronist Leaders Meet in Strategy Session with Juan Peron in Madrid in May 1972

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front is necessary if labor is to obtain a significant number of the candidate slots for the elections next March. Jose Rucci, the current secretary general of the General Confederation of Labor, carries little weight in Peronist inner circles and has done little to aid reunification or further the labor cause vis-a-vis the other Peronist sectors. He is likely to lose his position later this year if an alternative can be agreed upon.

There are at least five basic groups in Peronist labor, and they work in shifting alliances that make it extremely difficult to determine where the majority strength lies at any particular time:

- The Group of 8, or Neo-Vandoristas, have generally favored negotiating with the government;
- The Participationists, following the line of Jose Alonso who was murdered in 1970, have sought to participate in the government;
- The Authentic 62, led by the powerful metalworkers union, represent the orthodox Peronist line, but have been in a minority position in recent years;
- The Combative Unions, led by the telephone and port workers unions, are in open opposition to the government;
- The Independents, which include the important Light and Power Workers Federation, tend to steer clear of internal disputes.

The Neo-Vandoristas have been the pivotal group since 1970, usually siding with the Participationists to swing the balance of power to the moderates, but sometimes voting with the Combative unions. In addition to the above blocs, there are a number of more radical unions, whose stock rises as the nation's economic problems deepen. Radical Peronists allied with Marxist and Trotskyist unions, for instance, have recently gained control of the important Cordoba regional confederation.

In the years since Peron's ouster, labor has demonstrated more independence of Peron than



Jose Rucci

has the political sector. Labor leaders have paid lip service to Peron, but probably hoped in secret that the aging dictator would quietly pass away. As is true throughout the movement, the labor leaders carefully avoid public disagreement with Peron for fear of losing rank-and-file support. Peron demonstrated his continuing dominance last March when unions seeking a confrontation with the government seemed to have gained control. Meetings to consider a strike were postponed when Peron appealed to labor for calm and reason in dealing with the government. The Neo-Vandoristas, who had earlier joined the militant unions, subsequently sided with the Participationists, giving the moderates control.

**The Women's Sector**—The women's sector, particularly important during the lifetime of Eva Peron, has declined considerably in recent years. It, too, has the factional problems that trouble the rest of the movement. In the case of the women, tensions actually flared into violence

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Juana Laurrauri and Isabel Peron

when a dispute over leadership arose last November. When the women's representative on the Superior Council, Juana Laurrauri, was ousted from Peronist headquarters in Buenos Aires, a group allegedly supporting her stormed the headquarters using firearms and bombs. Peron later confirmed Juana Laurrauri in her leadership post, but sharp divisions lie just beneath the surface.

**The Youth Sector-** The youth wing of the movement was the last to develop. In fact, youth was strongly opposed to Peron while he was in power. As succeeding governments failed to deal effectively with Argentina's economic and social problems, however, youth began to turn toward Peronist social welfare policies. Youth found the nationalist content of Peronist doctrine particularly attractive. The origins of the youth movement have been traced to 1965, when Peronist leaders began to turn their attention to the universities, and to 1966, when President Ongania's intervention of the universities served to radicalize many previously apolitical students. Non-Marxists found it convenient to turn to Peronism as a solution to the nation's economic problems and the establishment's alleged reliance on "imperialist monopolies."

In recent years the Peronist youth movement has grown rapidly and, like the parent organization, has been subject to divisions. Peron recognized the growing significance of the youth movement by appointing two of its members—Francisco Licastro and Rodolfo Galimberti—to the Peronist Superior Council. In April, it was announced that the youth wing was being reorganized to combine a number of independent organizations into a single unit. Galimberti particularly is given to radical statements and has so alienated moderates on the Superior Council that such men as Eloy Camus have threatened to quit. The more radical youth fit well into Peron's strategy of being prepared for all eventualities. If moderation fails to achieve Peronist goals through participation in national elections, Peron will be in position to try the radical approach.

#### Peronist Extremist Groups

Most moderate Peronist leaders consistently deny any association with terrorist or guerrilla groups, but there are occasional references to so-called "special forces." Without question, there are terrorist groups that identify with Peronism. Just as with many of the youth adherents, however, the dedication of these groups to Peronism is tenuous. Extremists, and youth in general, find it good politics to call themselves Peronists, although many are much closer to Marxist, Castroist, or Maoist ideology. Peron himself has been reluctant to condemn violence, despite considerable government pressure on him to do so following the April murders of Fiat executive Sallustro and General Sanchez. The usual Peronist reaction has been to express shock or disapproval of the particular act, but to couple this with a statement charging the government with creating a climate that fosters violence.

There are three major terrorist groups in Argentina that claim to be Peronist. The Revolutionary Armed Forces is usually described as Marxist/Peronist, but seems to have little in common with Peronism other than the label. The

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[redacted] the Montoneros, are Peronists. The group draws primarily from the universities and is usually described as being made up of ultra-Catholic nationalists. The Peronist Armed Forces appears to be most closely aligned with the Peronist movement and most responsive to directives from Madrid. As Peronism has become more committed to full and active participation in the 1973 elections, the Peronist Armed Forces has reduced its activities, presumably on orders from Peron. The majority of activists for all these so-called Peronist extremist groups come from disenchanted youth who believe that violence is the only way to bring the revolution to Argentina. The Montoneros and the Peronist Armed Forces—and more recently a group called the Descamisados, the “shirtless ones,” the name given to the poor masses who brought Peron to power—have been claimed as part of the Peronist movement by leftist Peronist leaders, such as Superior Council member Galimberti, but have been disclaimed by the moderates.



Francisco Licastro

### Peronism and Argentine Politics

When General Lanusse ousted President Levingston in March 1971, he announced that the objective of his government would be to return Argentina to elected government. He recognized that political stability could be achieved only if the Peronists were reintegrated into the political process. At the same time, he was aware that Juan Peron's return to power was absolutely unacceptable to the military and that there was little likelihood that a Peronist would be permitted to assume the presidency. Thus began a long process of maneuvering and negotiating that has yet to reach its climax.

Lanusse's original strategy was to divide the Peronist movement even further while seeking the support of Peronist moderates for his cause. At the same time, he sought to pacify Peron with offers of financial assistance and—equally important—the rehabilitation of his image in Argentina. Serious economic problems have impeded Lanusse's efforts, but he has received some encouragement from moderate Peronists, particularly among labor. Negotiations with Peron so far have led to the dropping of all legal charges against the former president; Eva Peron's body, which had been spirited out of Argentina after Peron's ouster, has been handed over to Peron;

To strengthen his bargaining position with the Lanusse government, Peron is seeking to reunify the movement that he kept divided for so long. Peronists have sat out previous elections when they were denied full participation, but this time Peron is encouraging his followers to join in the electoral process. Peronists have participated in the Hour of the People—a loose coalition involving Peronists, Radicals, and other smaller parties—formed in late 1970 to press for elections. With that accomplished, Peron is calling for his supporters and former enemies to join in a “civic front” of all parties and movements to take

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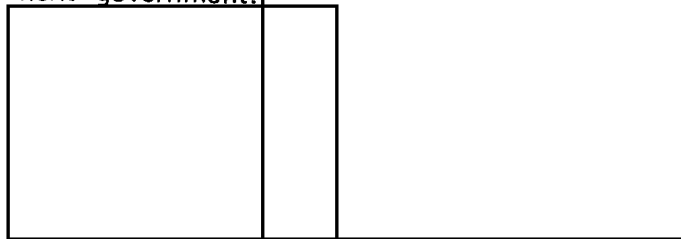
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part in the elections. There has been some response to this call, but the larger parties have so far refused the Peron invitation.

Several Peronist leaders have proclaimed Peron's candidacy, and this too appears to be part of his strategy. Although he and his followers are aware that it is unlikely he can ever become president again, maintaining his candidacy for the present will help to unify the movement. It also provides something to trade off in the negotiations with Lanusse.

25X1 [redacted] In the end, each may be willing to step down if the other does. The Peronists would obviously like to elect one of their own as president next March, but, barring this, they may well seek a deal in which they will support a candidate acceptable to the military in exchange for a major role in the next government.



### The Outlook for the Peronist Movement

Peron's strategy now seems to be to move cautiously toward cooperation with the military government in moving the nation toward elections. At the same time, he is aware that Lanusse has many hurdles to clear before elections are held. Peron will be helpful when he can, as when he urged restraint on labor, but he will also seek to keep his options open as long as possible. An upsurge in terrorism, a further decline of the economy, or even the appearance of overwhelming Peronist strength could prompt the armed forces to remove Lanusse and postpone elections. Thus, in Peron's eyes, a move too close to Lanusse at the present time could court disaster.

There is no doubt that in free elections the Peronists, under the Justicialist banner, would make a very strong showing, and in all probability they would win. It seems a reasonable possibility that some form of coalition government including the military, Peronists, and perhaps the Radical Party will take power on 25 May 1973 if elections are held as scheduled. Long and arduous negotiations and probably several coup threats stand between the Peronist movement and its best chance in 18 years to taste political power.

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If Peronists are indeed permitted to participate in directing the affairs of Argentina, what will become of Juan Peron? He certainly will not be permitted to participate directly in the government and may well remain in Madrid as something of an elder statesman until the day he dies. The former dictator, who has had such an impact on modern Argentine history, is now 76 years old.

[redacted] In any event, at his age he cannot personally guide the Peronist movement much longer, and the question of whether it will survive him is a very real one. Participation in government would help to create new national leaders and thus reduce, but not eliminate, the struggle for power in the movement that will follow Peron's death or incapacitation.

It seems almost certain that without his unifying figure, the extremes on the left and the right will drift away from the movement. The so-called moderates and orthodox Peronists will struggle for control. Labor is the base, however, and it will ultimately decide the life or death of the movement. With bread and butter economic issues holding labor together, the Peronist labor movement can probably survive Peron's death, although perhaps with reduced strength and power. With or without Peron, the Peronist movement seems likely to survive, probably moving somewhat to the left, and to be an important force in Argentina for the foreseeable future.

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